

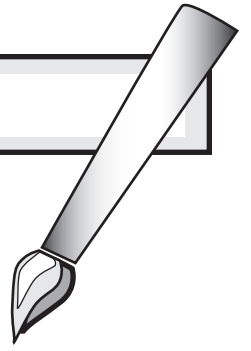
## BUILDING VOCABULARY

*“It is of interest to note that while some dolphins are reported to have learned English -- up to fifty words used in correct context -- no human being has been reported to have learned dolphinese.”*

Carl Sagan

*“Whatever we well understand we express clearly, and words flow with ease.”*

Nicholas Boileau



## OVERVIEW

Since the 1970's, teachers in all subject areas and at all grade levels have used a learning strategy based on a graphic organizer developed by Frayer (1969) to help students increase their vocabulary. Completing the four squares Frayer Model graphic organizer supports a comprehensive, thoughtful, and successful word analysis that leads students to clarify their understanding of terms and develop their ability to use words in their proper context.

The Frayer Model has two variations. In the first, students define the term in their own words, identify relevant facts or characteristics, and give examples and non-examples. The second approach also uses examples and non-examples, but instead requires students to identify the essential and non-essential characteristics of the term. This is similar to the Concept Attainment model of learning. A further twist is for the teacher to complete all of the squares and to ask students to identify the unknown word occupying the center of the diagram.

## IMPLEMENTING THIS ACTIVITY

1. Distribute the appropriate Frayer Model template.
2. Ask students to describe their understanding of the diagram and how it could be used. Younger students may need guidance to interpret and understand how to properly use the model.
3. Model the process before the class using a simple word that is familiar to most students. Words such as school, chair, or car work well.
4. Select a concept for students to investigate.
5. Use a Think-Pair-Share approach to have students complete, revise, and refine their work first on their own and then in groups. Students can either work at their own pace or you can move them sequentially through the process as a group.
6. Have students complete the Discovery Guide.
7. In a large group setting, complete a final check for student understanding of key concepts.

## ASSESSING THIS ACTIVITY

1. This approach can be used as a self-assessment before introducing a new concept.
2. A rubric can be designed to monitor student performance on this task.

## MANAGING THIS ACTIVITY

1. Have copies of both Frayer Model templates available in advance.
2. Prepare transparencies for modeling the process.

## CONTENT AREA APPLICATIONS

- English:* Have students select unfamiliar words from a pre-reading. Compile these before discussing the reading in class. Submit one or two words to this process.
- Mathematics:* Create a word web for geometric shapes. Have different students select different shapes to complete Frayer Model templates.
- Geography:* Use completed Characteristics models as a pretest review for distinguishing among the countries of Central America.
- Biology:* This is subject that is heavily-laden with vocabulary. Use it to help students to develop facility with words that are difficult to understand (e.g., mitosis) or distinguish between closely related terms.

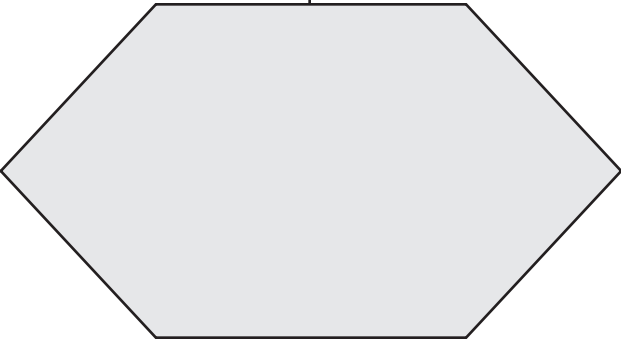
## REFERENCES

Frayer, D., Frederick, W.C., & Klausmeier, H.J. (1969). A schema for testing the level of cognitive mastery. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

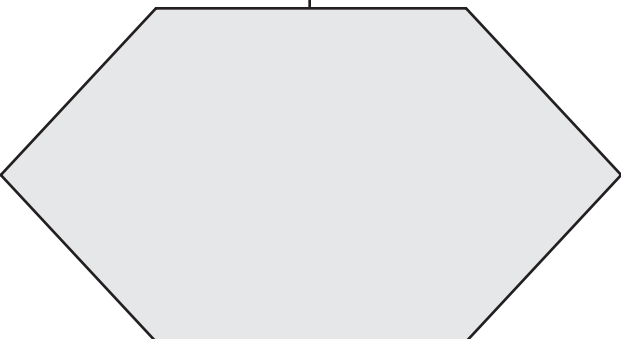
[www.justreadnow.com/strategies/frayer.htm](http://www.justreadnow.com/strategies/frayer.htm)

# FRAYER MODEL TEMPLATES

<i>Definition</i>	<i>Facts/Characteristics</i>
<i>Examples</i>	<i>Non-examples</i>



<i>Essential Characteristics</i>	<i>Nonessential Characteristics</i>
<i>Examples</i>	<i>Non-examples</i>



## **BUILDING VOCABULARY: STUDENT DISCOVERY GUIDE**

1. What mental processes helped you to distinguish between essential and the non-essential characteristics?

2. What was it like trying to define a word that you were not sure you fully understood?

3. What is the purpose of identifying examples and non-examples of the word?

4. How did using this graphic organizer affect your understanding of the term and your ability to use it in conversation or in writing?

## **BUILDING VOCABULARY: STUDENT DISCOVERY GUIDE**

5. What do you picture in your mind when you hear or read this term being used?  
Please draw or sketch it in this space.

6. Write a statement that uses this word in a proper context.